



## PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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**Purpose** – the analysis of the concept of psychological abuse (violence) under the relevant legislation and case practice of Lithuanian courts, and evaluation of methods for counterbalancing the interests of protection of victims and avoiding possible manipulations in domestic violence cases.

**Design/methodology/approach** – the methods of case-study, comparative research and modeling are used in the paper;

**Findings** – domestic violence victims often appear in a state of “learned helplessness”, which forces them to believe that the situation cannot be changed. The measures must be taken with the view of empowering rather than victimizing the victims: intoxication should never work as a defense (directly or indirectly), the right to privacy and the right to health of the woman must be seen as priorities in cases of domestic violence. The author is of the opinion that not all psychological violence might require state intervention, but the one that comes under the concept of “coercive control” (as described in the recent doctrine on domestic violence) certainly does. Coercive control is systematic and dangerous, because violence tends to increase and ends in fatalities. The approach based on the concept of coercive control also helps to avoid possible manipulations on the account of psychological violence. The case practice of the Supreme Court of Lithuania shows that the legal consciousness of the courts might be wide enough to understand the concept of “permanent (coercive) control” in cases of domestic violence.

**Research limitations/implications** – the term “coercive violence” is not adopted under the Lithuanian legislation and it is dubious whether it should be. Recently the concept of domestic violence in the United Kingdom has been increased to include the concept of “coercive violence”. Nevertheless, it is not a legal term under the law but rather, an intergovernmental policy concept. There might problems (structural, legal and



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etc.) in trying to translate the term into the law, as recognized by the scholars in this field, who are in favor of the approach based on coercive control;

**Practical implications** – the paper might be useful both for theorists and practitioners interested in domestic violence;

**Originality/Value** – there are a few research papers on the issue of domestic violence in Lithuania, and especially since the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence has been adopted. The concept of psychological violence has not been evaluated yet, although it is probably the most blurred term under the Law;

**Keywords:** domestic violence, psychological violence, coercive control;

**Research type:** research paper.